

Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Update - September, 2012



Land Acquisition

To date, the City of Scottsdale has protected 21,400 acres of the Sonoran Desert through a variety of means, including fee title acquisition, conservation easements, and zoning designations. Large tracts of land were acquired from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) in recent years including 400 acres in 2009, 2,000 acres in 2010, and 4,400 acres in 2011. The next significant acquisition for the Preserve is anticipated for November, 2012, when the ASLD will auction 6,400 acres of land in the northern region of the planned Preserve. The acquisition of this land will complete the wildlife linkage between the McDowell Mountains and the Tonto National Forest. Planning is underway for the acquisition of an additional 2,400 acres of State Land in the fall of 2013. This land is located in the interior of the McDowell Mountains.

Trailheads and Trails

- **Tom's Thumb Trailhead** – The new Tom's Thumb Trailhead is complete and open for public use. A grand opening ceremony is scheduled for the morning of October 18th. The trailhead includes parking for 200 vehicles and 12 horse trailers, restrooms, a shade ramada, and interpretive information. Water is NOT available at this trailhead. The Tom's Thumb Trail can be accessed from this site, as well as a few new trails including the Feldspar, Mesquite Canyon, and Marcus Landslide Trails. In early October, a series of interpretive signs will be installed along the Marcus Landslide Trail, providing fascinating information about the geology of the area including the landslide. These signs are being provided through a generous donation from the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.
- **Brown's Ranch Trailhead** – Construction began on this trailhead in August, with completion anticipated in early summer of 2013. This trailhead will provide parking for 200 vehicles and 24 horse trailers, restrooms, shade ramada, covered educational amphitheater, water for people, dogs, and horses, and a small City staff office and maintenance area. This trailhead will provide access to the vast network of trails throughout the northern area of the Preserve, including a trail to the top of Brown's Mountain. The trailhead will also access the planned Jane Rau Interpretive Trail, which will wind through a stunning boulder-lined canyon east of the trailhead. This trail is named in honor of Jane Rau, a long-time volunteer and founder of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.
- **Fraesfield Mountain and Granite Mountain Trailheads** – Planning is underway for two other trailheads that will access the northern region of the Preserve. These trailheads will be rustic in their design, with limited amenities. The Fraesfield Trailhead will be located north of Dynamite and west of 136th Street, and the Granite Mountain Trailhead will be located on the west side of 136th Street at the Lone Mountain alignment – where the high voltage powerlines are located. These trailheads are planned to be complete in the spring of 2013.

- **Upgrades at existing trailheads** – Upgrades occurred over the summer and will continue through the fall at various existing trailhead sites.
 - **Lost Dog Wash Trailhead** – In August, the parking lot was paved with a durable asphalt surface. This fall, the toilets at the trailhead building will be replaced with high efficiency flush toilets.
 - **Gateway Trailhead** – Significant portions of the main driveway have been replaced with a durable concrete surface. This new surface is low-maintenance and free of dust and erosion.
 - **Pinnacle Peak Park** – The parking lot at Pinnacle Peak Park is being remodeled to increase the number of parking spaces and provide a low-maintenance, durable parking surface. Work is expected to continue through the first week of October. The park will remain open during construction. Parking is available on 102nd Way, and hikers are asked to please stay out of the construction area by following the signs to the trail.

City Staff Reorganization

To respond to the rapid expansion of the Preserve and accommodate increasing demands, the City recently revised the organizational structure. Liz Hildenbrand-Crossman is now serving as the Preserve Manager, overseeing the operations and maintenance of the Preserve. Claire Miller, John, Loleit, and Robbin Schweitzer will report to Liz, and are responsible for the northern, central, and southern areas of the Preserve, respectively. Scott Hamilton will also report to Liz, and is responsible for the trail and trailhead planning. Kroy Ekblaw is the Preserve Director, overseeing the acquisition of land for the Preserve.

Hunting

The harvest of wildlife throughout Arizona, including the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, is the authority of the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD). Since the inception of the Preserve, the City has had an open line of communication with the AZGFD about wildlife management and hunting in the Preserve. Hunting with firearms (e.g. shotguns and rifles) is prohibited on lands owned by the City as part of the Preserve. Hunting with shotguns is permitted on State Trust Land. Archery hunting is permitted on lands owned by the City as part of the Preserve. The City will continue to have an open dialogue with the AZGFD about hunting and wildlife management throughout the Preserve.

For More Information:

City of Scottsdale
 Preserve Division
 (480) 312-7013
www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov/preserve

For info on public hikes and volunteer opportunities:
 McDowell Sonoran Conservancy
 (480) 998-7971
www.McdowellSonoran.org